

subjects: the occurrence of cancer after ichthyosis or syphilitic disease of the tongue furnishes a parallel instance. Mr. Henry Morris also, has recently put on record a case in which a small patch of eczema of the skin of the neck, remaining unchanged in character for five years, led in the course of four more years to the development of cancerous disease in the subjacent tissues on being irritated mechanically and by the application of caustics. But even such facts make it not the less a matter of urgency that the benign or malignant nature of any skin affection in the neighborhood of the nipple should be promptly recognized, particularly if Thin's view is correct, and I believe it is, that "Paget's disease" is no eczema, but malignant from the first.

In looking through the literature of the subject, not even now very voluminous, little aid is obtained towards the formation of a diagnosis. Much stress is usually laid on the *duration* of the disease, but this will be found to vary within strikingly wide limits. Thus, in Paget's original 15 cases, "cancer of the mammary gland followed within one year." In Butlin's first case the disease is said to have been simply "of long duration;" in the second it had lasted three years; and in his other two cases, examples of undoubted hard carcinoma, the eczema had preceded the appearance of breast tumor by about *two weeks* and three years respectively. In other recorded cases (Thin, M'Naughton Jones, Heywood Smith, C. B. Porter, Morris, Munro, and others) the period which had elapsed from the appearance of the "eczema" till the development of mammary cancer varied from about one year to six. Dr. C. B. Porter said: "The only guide for interference when the cancerous degeneration is not manifest is the duration. An eczema of the breast of long standing should be removed. He would consider it chronic after a year's duration, and advise excision." It seems quite clear, then, that if eczema of the nipple may precede the appearance of cancer of the gland by only a fortnight in some cases, and by a period as long as six years in others, duration *per se* cannot be depended on in making a diagnosis. In the case here related the disease had lasted  $2\frac{1}{2}$  years, and turned out to be simple eczema after all.

The descriptions given of the *appearance* of the parts affected are not less variable. In some cases the diseased surface was "intensely red, raw, finely granular," this being limited to the areola; in others it presented the characters of an ordinary chronic eczema, with minute vesication, succeeded by soft, moist, yellowish scabs;" occasionally it has been "like psoriasis, dry, with a few white scales slowly desquamating," this spreading far beyond the areola. In one instance "the nipple had melted away, leaving a hole, the part presenting "a foul depressed ulceration," and this lasted for four years before the appearance of any breast tumor; in another the nipple disappeared, leaving a circular superficial ulceration, surrounded

by eczema, having a sharply defined border; in others, the patches were hard, raised, uneven, scabbed, and showed simply "a very chronic eczema, apparently of ordinary nature." The nipple is spoken of as being sometimes "slightly retracted," depressed, or absent, while its site is occasionally occupied by a depressed ulceration. Pain is generally slight, though in one instance it became severe and stabbing as the breast tumor was forming. In short, a perusal of the literature of the subject has convinced me that at least two conditions have been included under the term "Paget's disease," the one a true cancerous condition, the other a simple chronic eczema. A part which is raw, granular, ulcerating, leading to the melting down and disappearance of tissue, cannot be said to be simply in an eczematous state; while, on the other hand, a superficial skin affection, with all the appearance of eczema in various stages of chronicity, lasting without appreciable change for many years, and often curable, cannot be set down as cancerous, though such conditions may be followed by malignant disease in a longer or shorter period, varying with the constitutional predisposition of the subject.

Regarding the curability of superficial skin diseases, which if left alone would infallibly develop into true cancer, Prof. W. Busch, of Bonn, records some most interesting experiences which have a direct bearing on the point. He first gives his views as to the manner in which epithelial cancer of the face and lips develops. The first step in the process he states to be a simple hypertrophy of the corneous epidermis on the very surface of the apparently healthy skin. Then a thick scurfy crust forms, falls, or is picked off, re-forms, is again removed, and so on till ulceration takes place. The epithelial elements pass downwards through the connective tissue, infecting the bones, glands, and other parts, and constituting true cancer. But this process often remains stationary for many years in its first stage, that of epithelial hypertrophy: in this stage it is not true cancer, and is curable by suitable treatment. He suggests that the hypertrophied epidermis offers simply a *mechanical* obstacle to the shedding of the rapidly formed corneous epithelium, preventing its progress outwards, and forcing it to grow inwards through the connective tissue; at any rate, he finds that when this mechanical obstacle—the scurfy crust—is removed, and is not permitted to re-accumulate, the process stops short of the inward growth of epithelial structures, and the cancer is held in check. This he accomplishes by the systematic use of alkaline solutions. To soften off the crusts he applies a 1 per cent. watery solution of soda, or, if the crust be very thick, a 1 to 40 solution: then the skin has afterwards to be washed daily several times with a 1 to 200 solution, to prevent the reformation of crusts. This has to be kept up during the rest of the patient's life, as if it be interrupted the epidermis begins at once to gather